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Agriculture and Food Supply

Agriculture, the mainstay of North Vietnam's economy, is based primarily on rice cultivation. About 70% of cultivated acreage is in rice, 20% in secondary crops (mostly corn, sweet potatoes and manioc), and 10% in industrial and miscellaneous crops (such as cotton, tobacco, sugar, and oilseeds). The spring harvest, which is heavily dependent on irrigation, accounts for about one-third of the yearly rice crop and for practically all other crops. The larger rice crop is harvested in the autumn. Fishing, the major source of the small amount of animal protein in the Vietnamese diet, is done by peasants in the numerous lakes and streams and by commercial fishermen in coastal waters. The annual catch is probably some 200,000 tons. Over the longer term, the regime looks to the agricultural sector not only for self-sufficiency in food but also as a source of labor and capital for furthering North Vietnam's industrialization. At present, agriculture is capable of providing only 85⁴⁷-90% of essential food requirements.

Food production increased during the first few years of Communist rule to a peak of some 3.9 million metric tons.* During much of the 1960's, however, average production declined (See Table 4). Weather conditions during seven out of the last ten years were not conducive to good rice production. In addition, managerial shortcomings and peasant disaffection with the cooperative system contributed to the decline in output. Imports of some 400,000-600,000 tons of rice, wheat flour, and corn -- almost entirely from China and the USSR -- were needed to maintain the average monthly foodgrain ration of 13-14 kilograms per person. By 1969, rice production had begun to recover with the introduction of high-yield rice varieties, which accounted for

*Measured in terms of milled rice and secondary crops expressed in milled rice equivalents.

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The war has seriously degraded North Vietnam's export capability -- now about one-third the level reached in 1965. More than one-half of North Vietnam's exports by value are agricultural products, handicrafts, and light manufactures (clothing and footwear). The remainder is made up principally of minerals, metals, and building materials. Pig-iron exports, formerly an important hard currency earner, have not been resumed since 1967 when the country's only significant iron smelter was bombed. Apatite exports were resumed in 1969 after a two-year halt and cement exports after a one-year lapse, but both were in modest volume. Although coal exports were never completely halted by the 1965-68 bombing, they had fallen to one-third of the 1965 level by 1970 and have been completely cut off since the mining of North Vietnam's ports in May 1972.)

The Communist countries are North Vietnam's major trading partners, accounting for more than 95% of North Vietnam's total trade in 1971 (compared to roughly 85% during 1961-1964). Of total trade with the Communist countries the USSR accounted for more than one-half, the East European Communist countries nearly one-third, and China the remaining one-sixth (See Table 7). Japan has been North Vietnam's largest non-Communist trading partner during 1965-1971, taking up more than one-half of Hanoi's non-Communist trade. North Vietnam traditionally maintains a favorable balance of trade with non-Communist countries, although it may run a small deficit with individual countries.

TABLE 7

DIRECTION OF TRADE (\$)
(Millions of U.S. dollars)

	1965		1966		1967		1968		1969		1970		1971	
	Imports	Exports	Imports	Exports	Imports	Exports	Imports	Exports	Imports	Exports	Imports	Exports	Imports	Exports
Communist Countries:														
U.S.S.R.*	125	30	135	25	255	20	325	20	400	15	360	15	340	25
China	52	20	90	20	150	10	135	15	160	10	75	15	110	10
Eastern Europe**	35	25.30	70.30	15.20	100.135	10.15	100.205	15	215.225	10.15	200.220	15	200	15
Other Communist countries	0	0	10	5	5	5	15	0	10	5	15	0	650	50
Total Communist countries	215	85	355	65	520	45	665	50	725	40	655	45	650	50
Non-Communist countries:														
Of which:														
Japan	4	11	6	10	2	7	2	0	7	6	5	6	4	11
France	2	3	2	3	1	1	1	Negl	1	Negl	1	1	Negl	1
Singapore	3	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	3	Negl	3
Hong Kong	Negl	3	Negl	3	Negl	1	Negl	1	Negl	2	1	3	Negl	5
Total non-Communist countries	15	25	15	20	5	10	5	10	10	15	10	15	5	20
Total	230	105	370	85	525	55	670	60	735	55	665	60	655	70

NOTE—Figures for Communist countries and area totals for non-Communist countries are rounded to the nearest \$5 million; figures for individual non-Communist countries are rounded to the nearest \$1 million.

*Imports include estimated grant aid deliveries not published in Soviet trade statistics.

**Figures include data for Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Romania. Imports include estimated grant aid deliveries not published in Eastern Europe trade statistics.

***Figures include data for Albania, Cuba, Mongolia, and North Korea. North Vietnam does not trade with Yugoslavia.